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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000147

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KISL](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: JORDAN GAZA ROUNDUP, JANUARY 15

REF: A. AMMAN 129
[1](#)B. AMMAN 113 (NOTAL)
[1](#)C. AMMAN 74

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Marches and protests continue across Jordan, with further demonstrations planned for after Friday prayers on January 16. Islamists announced that they are pondering a "million man march" to the Israeli border and a separate event to burn American and Israeli goods. Following the failure to obtain enough votes for a full Arab League summit on Gaza, Islamists have complained about government inaction. End Summary.

Friday Protests Planned

[1](#)2. (C) Jordanian Public Security Directorate (PSD) officials are expecting a busy Friday of protests. Demonstrations are planned following noon prayers on Friday for the Baqa'a Refugee Camp (located just north of Amman), along with heavily Palestinian neighborhoods in Irbid and Zarqa. A march is also scheduled from a mosque near the Prime Minister's office to the European Commission. The largest march promises to be an Islamic Action Front (IAF) sponsored demonstration in downtown Amman, which will be addressed by Islamist leaders. Unscheduled and smaller marches are expected throughout Jordan following Friday prayers. Turnout is still uncertain, but is expected to be at least on par with protest numbers from one week ago (Ref C). Royal Court Chief Nasser Lozi told the Ambassador that protests are starting to take their toll on the Kingdom's internal stability.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Aljazeera.net reported on January 14 that Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood (JMB) head Hammam Sa'id is considering a "million man march" on January 16 to the Israeli border, and has begun talks with trade unions and others in the anti-normalization movement on the subject. Note: It is highly unlikely that the JMB could stage, or that Jordanian officials would allow, such a march to proceed, despite their recent openness to demonstration requests. One million people represents approximately one-sixth of Jordan's population and half the population of Amman. End Note.

[1](#)4. (U) Around 1,000 professors and staff members at the University of Jordan (UJ) marched in support of Gaza on January 14. UJ President Khaled Karaki joined in the march, which followed multiple protests by students in recent weeks.

[1](#)5. (C) As protests continue, some of our contacts are starting to analyze the longer term political ramifications. Al-Ghad columnist and former Muslim Brother Mohammed Abu Rumman told poloff that unleashing the Palestinian street was a "strategic mistake." He acknowledged that the King may have let the protests go on to allow for some venting of emotion, but said that the protests have given the Jordanians of Palestinian origin a sense of identity and cohesion that they had not been able to demonstrate before. He cited a

noticeable uptick in the numbers of people wearing the black and white Palestinian keffiyahs (scarves) as proof that rising demonstrations of Palestinian identity are an unwanted side effect of allowing protests to continue unabated (Ref B). Separately we have observed a popular increase in wearing of such scarves by both Palestinian-origin Jordanians and East Bankers.

Economic Impacts

¶6. (U) Government-owned Al-Rai newspaper contained a paid advertisement on January 15 from trade unions and the Islamic Action Front inviting the public to a "burning of U.S. and Zionist products" on January 17, which will be attended by IAF MP Hamzah Mansour and JMB head Hammam Sa'id.

¶7. (C) An Embassy Amman contractor reported on January 15 that its supplier of vehicle tires abruptly ended its service agreement with the company in protest of its involvement with the U.S Embassy. When the contractor offered to settle the unpaid portions of the account in advance of its cancellation, the tire company refused to accept payment.

Back and Forth Over Proposed Arab League Summit

¶8. (U) Islamists are voicing their dismay over Jordan's lack of support for a proposed Arab League summit on Gaza. On the JMB website, the organization's head Hammam Sa'id declared his "astonishment" towards Jordan's official silence on the summit. In an open letter to PM Nader Dahabi, Sa'id stated:

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"We do not accept Jordan's absence from this summit, and ask your government to participate...so that Jordan can contribute in any effort that may serve the cause and abort the enemy's conspiracies." Islamist-oriented unions, along with the Higher Coordinating Council of Opposition Parties, also issued a joint statement urging Jordan to attend the summit. "The call for a summit is the least that can be done as Israel commits this holocaust against our brothers in Gaza," the statement said.

¶9. (C) The GOJ did not respond publicly to these charges, however, a January 14 statement from State Minister for Media Affairs Nasser Judeh said that Jordan "stands with the Arab consensus" on Gaza but did not commit to JordQan officials attending. The English language Jordan Times reported on January 15 that the Emir of Qatar phoned King Abdullah -- Royal Court Chief Nasser Lozi confirmed to the Ambassador that the call was an attempt to persuade the King to send Jordanian representatives to the summit. FM Salah Al-Bashir told the Ambassador on January 15 that Jordan would send MFA Secretary General Mohammed Al-Khalidi to the preparatory economic ministerial in Kuwait on the 16th.

Visit Embassy Amman's Website at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman/>
Beecroft